

e swimming



Swimming as Therapy for Disadvantaged People

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS, CARETAKES AND TUTORS

About the project

eSwimming is a project funded with support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission with the aim of promoting swimming as a therapy for disadvantaged people all over Europe. It is intended for teachers, social workers, volunteers, disadvantaged persons, their parents and caretakers. The project will provide materials on the use of swimming as a therapy, promotional materials as well as opportunities to exchange ideas, experience, information, knowledge and good practices. It is being carried out by a consortium of partners from Italy, Germany, Spain, UK (Scotland) and Slovenia.

Special benefits for disadvantaged persons

Swimming is successfully used and is recommended as a form of therapy to treat all sorts and physical injuries as well neurological and psychological conditions. There are several particular advantages for disadvantaged persons, not only for their physical well-being, but reaching to other areas.

1. Under the correct supervision, swimming is practically a low risk form of therapy. Water's buoyancy relieves stress normally placed on muscles by gravity, giving a person a grander range of motion and coordination. Such environment gives a person a chance to build muscles and improve coordination. Added effect is that the sensation of water on the body is also good for neurological development.
2. Swimming is considered to be safer than land based physical therapy because there are no hard surfaces in the pool for the person to fall and hurt themselves on. As long as there is a qualified swim therapist present the water will prove to be a safe environment.
3. Another goal of using swimming as therapy for people with special needs is to increase independence (physical activity, increase of capabilities, interaction with other people, etc.). Increasing their independence can increase their self-confidence. Such self-confidence can then further lead to a better quality of life.
4. Social integration has been one of the important effects of swimming as therapy witnessed at the swimming groups, e.g. like the one in Velenje, Slovenia. Kids that are participating in the program regularly, and according to their parents, started socializing more in school and outside school environment, not only amongst themselves but with the general public as well. They became more attentive in classes and less restless.
5. Mental skills are improved as swimming training includes various cognitive skills and links to their therapy (e.g. counting, repeating words, drawing or making geometrical figures in the water, etc.)



Introduction

Here we will give out some additional information for beginners, and describe what might await you while starting out your water adventure such as common difficulties faced by beginners, short description of exercises and what they were meant to do for you, importance of following the pool rules and trusting your trainers.

Common difficulties faced by beginners

If you never tried swimming before initially when you start out you may feel some discomfort with being in the water. This is a result of an sensation of being immersed, and is completely understandable. We do spend our lives on dry land, and water may seem like a foreign environment. It is also opposed to our natural feeling of being upright and dry. But be assured this will go away as you spend more time in the water.

Being able to assume a horizontal position in water is essential to learning how to swim. Many students have discomfort of having their ears and head touched by water. A key thing to remember is that when you learn how to breathe properly, laying down on the water's surface is the most comfortable and safest possible position because it will always offer you an unobstructed way to breathe.

Fear can be a strong deterrent from attempting to participate in swimming as therapy. If you have had a previously negative experience with being in the water and you feel apprehensive, the best thing to do is to inform your trainer so that they can provide you with additional help and support.

Most of the initial exercises you will be going through have been specifically designed to make you comfortable with water in order to overcome any discomforts, and to increase the confidence in your own abilities.

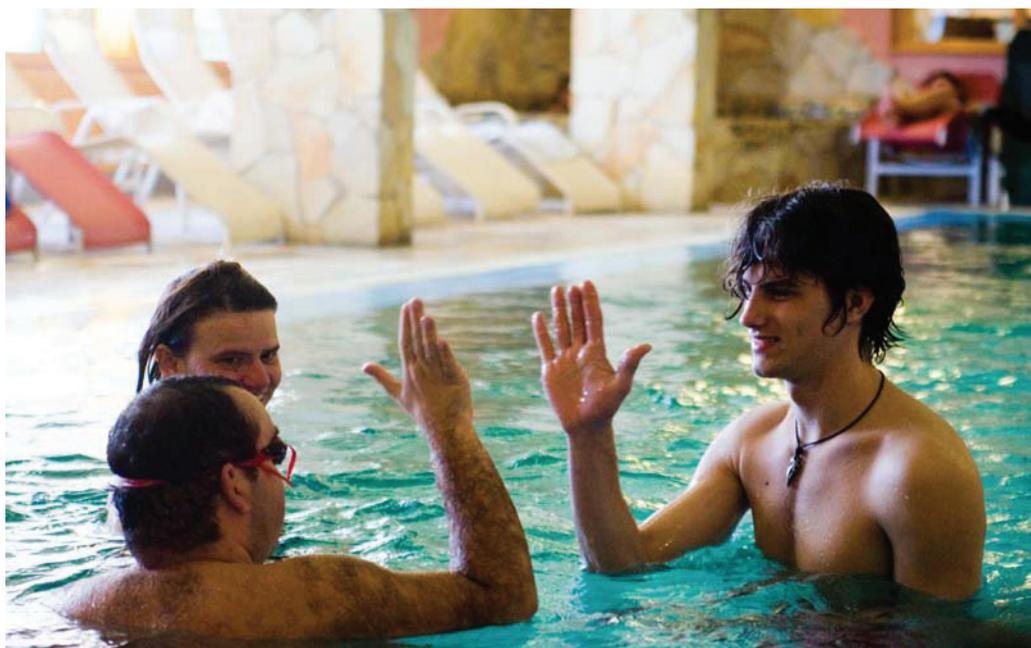


Short description of exercises

As mentioned above many of the exercises you will be going through at the beginning are meant to help you get mentally adjusted to water and raise your comfort level and confidence. They will include various forms of breathing exercises and various ways of moving through shallow water. As you get more comfortable you will learn how to master different positions in water by learning how to rotate. In the following steps you learn how to balance and glide on water's surface. This is done through repetition and over time your trainers will encourage you to repeat the exercises more independently as you become more comfortable and confident. All is meant to lead you to develop an individual way of swimming, and later to learning proper swimming techniques.

Following pool guidelines and working with your trainers

All pools have different guidelines. Your trainers will inform you before you start your course. Guidelines have been designed for your safety. It is also important to note that we (trainers) are responsible for anything that might happen to you and patients is very important. The role of the trainer aside from teaching you how to swim is to make you feel safe and comfortable. They will try to develop a trusting relationship with you. You try to do the same, it will help you learn faster if you trust the person teaching you. Even if trainers appear to be strict sometime they will always try to give you as much support, encouragement, and help that you need. Last thing to remember, communication is the most important part of learning, so if you ever have any questions or concerns please voice them.



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